(a) whether Government propose to reconstruct the bridge (Bagh bridge) over the Tista river on the National Highway 31;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when the concept of Government to construct a bridge at Sevak Bazar (alternative bridge of the old Bagh Bridge) is likely to come in force?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI R.P.N. SINGH): (a) to (c) There is no proposal for reconstruction of the existing Bagh Bridge over river Tista on NH-31. However, a proposal for construction of a new bridge in addition to the existing Bagh Bridge costing Rs. 98.55 crore has been forwarded by the Government of West Bengal. As the work does not find a place in the Annual Plan 2009-10 and the State has sufficient ongoing works in hand for completion within allocated funds, there is no likelihood of the sanction being accorded to this work during 2009-10.

Upgradation of state Highways to National Highways

1508. SHRI KANJIBHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Gujarat has submitted a proposal to the Government of India for the upgradation of State Highways to National Highways keeping in view that Gujarat has 25 per cent of country's coast line with many ports which need to be upgraded to National Highway; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government and the present status of the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI R.P.N. SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Expansion of NH network is a continuous process and declaration of new NH is taken up from time to time depending upon requirement of connectivity, *inter-se* priority and availability of funds.

Vadodara-Mumbai express highway

1509. SHRI KANJIBHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 730 given in the Rajya Sabha on 23rd October, 2008 and state:

(a) whether the Request for Qualification has been invited by Government;

(b) if so, whether the work on the said express way has been started;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether it is a fact that Government of Gujarat has frozen land in 300 m width along the proposed alignment of Vadodara-Mumbai Express Highways as back as 1991;